



Davis-Monthan Air Force Base is a key Air Combat Command installation, located within the city limits of Tucson, Arizona, with a colorful history and a long tradition of excellence in service to our country.

The base is named in honor of Lieutenants Samuel H. Davis and Oscar Monthan, two Tucsonans and World War I era pilots who died in separate military aircraft accidents. Davis, who died in a Florida aircraft accident in 1921, attended the University of Arizona prior to enlisting in the Army in 1917. Monthan enlisted in the Army as a private in 1917, was commissioned as a ground officer in 1918, and later became a pilot. He was killed in a crash of a Martin bomber in Hawaii in 1924.

Since the early days of military aviation Tucsonans had wanted an Army aviation field, and constantly campaigned for one. They received their wish when, on 1 November 1925, the Army opened an airstrip, known as Davis-Monthan Landing Field. It proved an ideal location, since Tucson offered excellent weather, was on the southern aviation routes, which meant pilots didn't have to try and struggle over high mountain ranges, and was located optimal distances from other aviation centers. Originally located at the site of today's rodeo grounds, civic leaders worked with Army officials to create a larger complex to fully gain their dreams of a military aviation complex. Army aviation leaders agreed to help fund a new location, the site Davis-Monthan now occupies. On 6 October 1927, Charles Lindbergh, fresh from his non-stop crossing of the Atlantic Ocean, flew his "Spirit of St. Louis" to Tucson to help dedicate Davis-Monthan as Tucson Municipal Airport -- then the largest municipal airport in the United States. (The reason it was the largest centered on the fact it was one of a handful of municipal airports in the nation.)

In 1940, with war clouds on the horizon, Army Air Corp leaders selected the field for expansion. In light of it's now solely military role, the base became known as Davis-Monthan Field on 3 December 1941. Even before Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, Army Air Corps leaders started to increasingly utilize D-M, first by sending a squadron of Boeing B-17 *Flying Fortresses* for bombing practices. Next came some Douglas B-18 *Bolo* bombers, with both training and observation missions. While it took nearly 3 years to complete the base infrastructure, crew training continued. This initially consisted of training Consolidated B-24 *Liberators* crews, but in 1944 the sound of Boeing B-29 *Superfortresses* could be heard over the Old Pueblo. All this came to a screeching halt on 14 August 1945 when the Japanese unconditionally surrendered. One little known role D-M played in the war effort consisted of housing German Prisoners of War from June 1945 to March 1946.

With the end of the war, operations at the base came to a virtual standstill. However, Tucson's dry climate and alkali soil made it an ideal location for aircraft storage and preservation (a mission that has continued to this day). Now, instead of training, Army Air Force personnel selected the base as a storage site for hundreds of decommissioned aircraft, particularly vast amounts of excess B-29s and Douglas C-47 *Skytrains*. The base also acted as a separation center, which brought the base populace to a high of 11,614 people in September 1945.

Strategic Air Command ushered in the Cold War era at D-M in March 1946 with a total of 219 personnel. In May, two B-29 bombardment groups, the 40th and 444th Bombardment Groups, arrived. Once again, the sights and sounds of the B-29 filled the skies over Tucson. In September 1946, both these units inactivated and the 43d Bombardment Group picked up the personnel and aircraft. On 27 February 1948, 5 months after the Air Force becoming a separate service, D-M received its current title of Air Force Base. While at D-M, 43d personnel set numerous firsts and records, including formation, distance, and speed flights. The culmination of these records came on 2 March 1949 when the crew of *Lucky Lady II*, a Boeing B-50A *Superfortress II* (serial number 46-010), completed the first nonstop round-the-world flight, having covered 23,452 miles in 94 hours and 1 minute. (While the 43d was stationed at D-M, the flight originated from Carswell AFB, Texas.) Refueled four times in the air by KB-29 tankers of the 43rd Air Refueling Squadron, *Lucky Lady II*'s crew received the Mackay Trophy, given annually by the National Aeronautic Association for the outstanding flight of the year. They also won the Air Age Trophy, an Air Force Association award given each year in recognition of significant contributions to the public understanding of the air age.

The jet age came to the base in 1953, when SAC's 43d and 303d Bombardment Groups started converting to the new Boeing B-47 *Stratojet*. (The first jets actually assigned to D-M consisted of Lockheed T-33 *Shooting Stars*.) In April of the same year, Air Defense Command appeared in the form of the 15th Fighter Interceptor Squadron, equipped with North American F-86A *Sabre*, and later F-86D, fighters. (The squadron eventually equipped with McDonnell F-101B *Voodoos*.)

Another major change for D-M came in 1960, when work commenced on the first of 18 Titan II missile silos destined for control of the 390th Strategic Missile Wing. The first missile arrived on base in November 1962, with the last site declared operational in November 1963. Meanwhile, July 1963 saw the arrival of the 4080th Strategic Wing and their Lockheed WU-2 (later changed to U-2) reconnaissance aircraft. Crews began flying global reconnaissance missions, and later came under control of the 100th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing. The U-2s remained at the base until 1976, when they were transferred to Beale AFB, Calif. The year 1964 brought back the combat crew training mission of the World War II years -- this time for the Air Force's newest and most sophisticated fighter, the McDonnell-Douglas F-4 *Phantom II*, and also saw the 4080th gain the Lockheed DC-130A *Hercules*, associated drones, and Sikorsky CH-3 helicopters.

In July 1971, the 355th Tactical Fighter Wing, chosen to fly the Chance-Vought A-7D *Corsair II*, activated at D-M and the F-4s moved to Luke AFB, Arizona in September. On 1 October 1976, Strategic Air Command transferred control of D-M to Tactical Air Command, ending SAC's 30-year reign at the base. It was also that year the 355 TFW accepted the first Republic A-10A *Thunderbolt II*. Since 1979, D-M has been the sole active duty training location for A-10 pilots.

The 1980s brought several diverse missions to D-M. The headquarters charged with overseeing them consisted of the 836th Air Division, which activated 1 January 1981. Shortly thereafter, the base welcomed the 868th Tactical Missile Training Group, which trained the crews to operate, maintain, and defend the Ground Launch Cruise Missile system. The 41st Electronic Combat Squadron, equipped with the EC-130H *Compass Call* aircraft, arrived next on 1 July 1980, and reported to the 552d Airborne Warning and Control Wing. One year later, the 868th Tactical Missile Training Squadron made Davis-Monthan its home. Last, the 602nd Tactical Air Control Wing, responsible for the Air Force's tactical air control system west of the Mississippi River, stood up at D-M on 1 September 1982. In 1984 the Titan II wing inactivated, while the cruise missile mission terminated in 1990. Resulting treaties between Russia and the United States concerning cruise missiles meant the base was subject to inspection under the INF and START agreements.

On 1 May 1992, senior Air Force leaders implemented the policy of one base, one wing, one boss. Thus, the 836 AD and 602 TACW inactivated while the 41 ECS and 43 ECS (activated at D-M the same day) came under control of the 355th Fighter Wing. The inclusion of the *Compass Call* aircraft to the wing also meant another redesignation for the wing, now called the 355th Wing. Now that the wing again provided support to D-M, it gained the 355th Support Group, along with the 355th Operations Group, 355th Logistics Group, and 355th Medical Group under the objective wing concept. On 19 July 1994, the 42d Airborne Command and Control Squadron stood up at D-M with personnel and aircraft from the inactivated 7th Airborne Command and Control Squadron. The squadron's EC-130E Hercules aircraft carry an airborne battlefield command and control center capsule, and provides continuous control of tactical air operations in the forward battle area and behind enemy lines. This capability added yet more strength to the wing's combat capability.

Besides the wing, there are numerous tenant units from other major commands, the Air Force Reserve, and Air National Guard. Some of these consist of 12th Air Force headquarters (ACC), Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Center (Air Force Material Command), 305th Rescue Squadron (Air Force Reserve), and Detachment 1, 120th Fighter Interceptor Group (Air National Guard).

Twelfth Air Force is charged with commanding, administering, and supervising wings in Arizona, California, Idaho, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Utah, and also acts as the air component for US Southern Command. Twelfth Air Force operates combat-ready forces and equipment for air superiority -- gaining and maintaining control of airspace; interdiction -- disrupting enemy lines of communication and logistics; and close air support -- working with U.S. and allied forces to defeat the enemy at the point of contact. AMARC is responsible for storing more than 5,000 excess aircraft from the Department of Defense and Coast Guard. The center annually in-processes about 400 aircraft for storage and out-processes about the same number for return to the active service, either as remotely controlled drones or sold to friendly foreign governments. The 305th Rescue Squadron flies the Sikorsky HH-60G *Pavehawk* helicopters. Its primary mission is search and rescue. Last, Detachment 1, 120th Fighter Interceptor Group, operates the Lockheed F-16 *Fighting Falcon*. Each week, two F-16s rotate to the base from their home base in Great Falls, Mont. These aircraft can scramble in less than five minutes to identify, intercept, and, if necessary, destroy any airborne threat to U.S. security.

Other federal agencies using the base include the Federal Aviation Administration, the U.S. Customs Service Air Service Branch, the U.S. Corps of Engineers, the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, and a detachment of the Naval Air Systems Command. Approximately 6,000 military and 1,700 civilian employees work at Davis-Monthan and nearly 13,000 military retirees reside in the Tucson area.